DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 530 CE 051 010

AUTHOR Beaudin, Bart P.; Kincaid, Jim
TITLE ALF to the Rescue (An Adult Learning Facilitator Competency Model).
PUB DATE Oct 88
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Fall Conference of the Colorado Association for Continuing Adult Education and the Colorado Association of Community Educators (Colorado Springs, CO, October 6-8, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Adult Educators; *Adult Learning; *Competence; Definitions; *Educational Environment; *Models; Postsecondary Education; *Teacher Qualifications; Teaching Methods; Trainers
IDENTIFIERS *Facilitators

ABSTRACT

ALF is an acronym for Adult Learning Facilitator, a designation that may be warranted to build a distinguishable identity for adult educators. If a professional considers climate setting and other facilitative behaviors as a major priority before and during any learning event, then he or she should be considered an ALF. If a professional has content and subject matter expertise as the major priority in the learning event, he or she should not be considered an ALF. Using this phrase connotes a sincere focus on the learning of the adult. At present, many professional groups that attempt to serve adults in their learning situations are reviewing the competencies needed by their membership. This may be the time to look at the competencies needed for practitioners in the field of adult education and to consider an alternative model that emphasizes the adult educator's specialized skills. Of these skills, climate setting may be the most representative of an ALF. The ALF model is a repackaging of the existing adult educator competencies to emphasize the priority on facilitation in the profession of adult education. The ALF Competency Model consists of a core competency, rationale, assumptions, proficiencies, conditions, performances, and criteria. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED300530

CACAE/CACE FALL CONFERENCE
October 6-8, 1988

ALF TO THE RESCUE
(An Adult Learning Facilitator Competency Model)

Invited Presentation
by

Bart P. Beaudin
&
Jim Kincaid
Colorado State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B Beaudin
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INTRODUCTION

This **ALF** is not the NBC "extraterrestrial" one. No, it is each of us engaged in the facilitation of learning among adult learner clientele. This **ALF**, then, is the Adult Learning Facilitator who is a very "down to earth" individual -- meaning you or me. While our **ALF** may at times achieve "miracles", he or she is nonetheless a very important professional in the reality of contemporary society.

The process of facilitation and facilitating may be the cornerstone on which to build a distinguishable identity for adult educators. This is not to suggest that adult educators are the only helping professionals that lay claim to the concept, but it does suggest that the field of adult education should use the concept as a foundation. If a professional considers climate

CE051010

setting and other facilitative behaviors as a major priority before and during any learning event, then he or she should be considered an **ALF**. If a professional has content and subject matter expertise as the major priority in the learning event, he or she should NOT be considered an **ALF** but rather a "pedagogical instructor." This group should assume the label of instructor or teacher in whatever subject matter is being considered.

ALFs are subject matter specialists that have chosen to use facilitative skills to establish a learning situation that provides the best conditions for learning. Although this "approach priority" perspective may appear to be a simple postulate, it may provide a solution to our concern for a common identity.

ADULT LEARNING FACILITATOR (ALF) COMPETENCY MODEL

Rationale

It may be time for adult educators to lay claim to a label that describes what they do best for the learning situation of the adult learner. That label is the **"Adult Learning Facilitator"**. Using this phrase connotes a sincere focus on the learning of the adult. Boshier (1985) reported that the labels that are most prevalent to describe the roles of adult educators are teacher and planner. These are effective descriptors but may not get at the uniqueness that is proposed in the phrase **"Adult Learning Facilitator."** In retrospect, it may have been more appropriate to

preface each title with "Adult." Introducing, or rearranging a phrase that could become a unique label is a starting point from which to reexamine what adult educators really do. The subject matter expert that works with adults would be classified as an "Adult Teacher" and the designer of programs would be an "Adult Program Planner." The Adult Learning Facilitator would approach every learning event with a priority for facilitation.

At the present time many professional groups that purport to serve adults in their learning situations are reviewing the competencies needed by their membership. For example, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) is in the process of finalizing its competency list. It was reported at the 1988 National ASTD Conference that its competencies will focus on training and development, career development, and organizational development. Other professional groups have also been developing their competency lists. The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI) was founded as a not-for-profit corporation in 1984. "Its mission is to promote high standards of professional practice in the areas of training, performance, and instruction for the benefit of individuals and organizational consumers through research, definition, and measurement of competencies." (p. vi) In 1988 IBSTPI published "Instructor Competencies: The Standards, Volume 1." The Instructor Competencies define generic instructor roles. It is interesting to note that the authors used the term "instructor" in preference to trainer, teacher, or facilitator (p. 2). If the field of adult

education has been hesitant to take ownership of the term "facilitator" the IBSTPI group is one that doesn't want it. In addition the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) is also developing its own list of competencies. What the above discussion suggests is that this may be the time to look at the competencies needed for practitioners in the field of adult education and to consider an alternative model that emphasizes the adult educator's specialized skills.

There are a number of competency studies that have been completed that suggest what an adult educator or trainer should know and do to help adults learn (Bunning and Rossman, 1978; Mocker, 1974; Pinto and Walker, 1978;). Almost all of the studies list competencies in various degrees of sophistication in terms of performance outcomes, conditions, and criteria.

To provide a unique list of competencies for adult educators that continuously emphasizes the concept of facilitation, it is proposed that another dimension be added to all competencies that are needed by adult educators: climate setting. Climate setting would be technically designated as the primary core competency, the performance of which enables an **ALF** to establish the most effective psychological and physical environment possible for learning. In addition to the core set of **ALF** competencies, there are added "specialized" competencies for the Instructional Designer, Manager, and Consultant.

Each set of competencies is labeled as follows:

Adult Learning Facilitator (ALF).

Adult Learning Facilitator (ALF) / Instructional Designer.

Adult Learning Facilitator (ALF) / Manager.

Adult Learning Facilitator (ALF) / Consultant.

All of the above categories would be identified as adult educator roles.

Rationale for Refinement of Adult Educator Competencies

The **ALF** model is a repackaging of the existing adult educator competencies to emphasize the priority on facilitation in the profession of adult education. The following arguments are being presented to support a change in the label for adult educators.

* Many adult educators see themselves as facilitators (Brockett, 1983; Brundage and Mackeracher, 1980; Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1975; Sisco, 1984). Therefore the Adult Learning Facilitator label should be an easy one to accept. * Adult educators are part of a vested interest group that needs an identifying descriptor that sets them apart from other groups. * Adult educators need to label themselves in a way that is congruous to what they do and is understandable by the general public. The perception of what a person is doing is a matter of what's in the eyes of the beholder. That is, identity is

also established, in part, by what clients expect of persons who carry certain role designations, eg.; doctor, lawyer, teacher. If adult education wants to shake the "pedagogical" perception (expectations), adult educators need to behave differently (as facilitators) so that people come to expect those different behaviors and not, solely those "common" to teaching or instructing, generally.

* Adult education serves many publics and therefore there is a need to have a unifying descriptor that identifies practitioners in terms of a generic competency that is needed for every population served.

* Most practitioners in the field are part-time adult educators. They usually have a subject matter expertise that describes their primary role and could use a descriptor that is action oriented and is explicit as to their adult educator role.

* Changes are occuring in the roles of the trainer / educator in business and industry. For example, the ASTD is revising its list of competencies and has deliniated training and development, career development, and organizational development as the areas of expertise. This activity suggests that it is a good time for adult educators to consider changes in the competencies required of today's adult educator.

* The knowledge / information explosion necessitates an alternative stance. In today's adult education milieu, it is practically impossible to be in the teacher role and to be

seen as the only resource.

Is ALF What Is Needed?

It would seem appropriate then to present a model that would get at the only role or process where there appears to be some general agreement. The proposed general agreement is centered around the adult educator's perception that he or she is a facilitator of adult learning. If this perception is used as a foundational basis from which to develop a unique set of competencies, then it appears that this stance, in part, would support the position that adult education is a genuine field of practice.

This tact aligns with the authors' opinion that the field of adult education is structured upon a few theoretical constructs and many assumptions. Again practice is being supported by building on an assumption that has general acceptance, namely that adult educators would like to be primarily seen as facilitators of learning.

If the aforementioned is true, then it would be expected that the literature would be continuously supporting the premise that adult educators see themselves as facilitators. But because the field is structured upon a few theoretical constructs and many assumptions, the adult education research literature hasn't been driven by the assumption that adult educators are facilitators. This point can be best illustrated by an attempt to locate the

literature in the field that considers the role of the facilitator and facilitation.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education reviews literature and inputs data into the ERIC system. Accessing the data is through descriptors that have been identified in the adult education literature. Descriptors are determined and defined as soon as a term has had at least fifty citations as an identifier. This procedure is followed to insure that only major terms are used to describe resources and to ultimately be retrievable. The terms facilitator and facilitation do not exist as descriptors in the ERIC data base. Although most adult educators would describe themselves as facilitators and use the term facilitation, the terms have not been used enough as identifiers in the adult education literature to warrant entry as a descriptor. This action or in-action may be a good example of the incongruence that exists between what adult educators actually do and how they are perceived. (There is hope on the horizon because the term facilitators is classified as an identifier and may soon become a descriptor.)

THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION

There has been no attempt in our research to identify and describe competencies (i.e., knowledges, attitudes, and/or skills) which are limited in application to special adult educator roles (e.g., instructional designers, managers, and consultants) as they

are performed in certain settings. Therefore, it is our contention that the **ALF** core competencies identified and described in this work are common to all who are engaged in an adult learning facilitator role. In addition, there are special competencies required of those who serve as an "Adult Learning Facilitator:Instructional Design", or as an "Adult Learning Facilitator: Manager", or as an "Adult Learning Facilitator: Consultant". Thus there is an "ALF" role to which certain specializations, namely, the "ALF:ID", or the "ALF:M", or the "ALF:C" may be added. Again, this discussion deals only with the core competencies pertinent to the more generic "ALF" role.

Our "ALF Comes to the Rescue" through the identification of his or her core competencies as an effective facilitator of learning among adult learners. Adult education and related programs are

ever more diverse in the types of organizations and in the kinds of settings for learning they provide. Thus it has become of paramount concern among many who work with adults in educationally related activities that **ALF** core competencies be identified and described. Such identification and description can serve as the means to establishing generic standards for performance that apply to all organizations and settings, regardless of their diversity.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS USED IN COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION

Competence is..

"the individual's demonstrated capacity to perform, i.e. the possession of knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics needed to satisfy the special demands or requirements of a particular role in a particular situation in a safe and acceptable manner." (ERIC Scope Note, 1980)

Competency is..

"the ability to actually perform." Knowledge, attitudes, and effort are of little value without results. (Blank, W.E. (1982). Handbook for developing competency-based training programs. New Jersey. NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.)

Proficiency is..

"the capacity to perform effectively if given the opportunity, which usually depends on a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills." (Knox, A.B. (1984). Generalizations about adult learning, motivation, and proficiency. AAACE presentation, 1984)

Facilitation is..

to "make easy, promote, help forward (action or result)." (The concise oxford dictionary, 5th ed., 1964, p.432)

ADULT LEARNING FACILITATOR (ALF) COMPETENCY MODEL

An **ALF** is a professional who considers climate setting and other facilitative behaviors as a major priority before and during any learning event.

ALF core competencies are common to all who are engaged in an adult learning facilitator role. There are "specialized" competencies needed by some adult educators who have an additional role as an Instructional Designer, Manager, or Consultant.

Format for ALF Competencies

The following format portrays the hierarchy that will be used to describe the **ALF** model.

Core Competency

Rationale

Assumptions

Proficiencies

Conditions

Performances

Criteria

ALF Competency Format Definitions

ALF Core Competency is an ability to perform the facilitator role with adult learners.

Rationale connotes why each core competency is essential to performance as a proficient "ALF".

Assumptions state the premises upon which the core competency and proficiencies are established.

Proficiencies are specific measureable descriptors of the core competency.

Conditions are those environmental circumstances considered prerequisite to performance.

Performances are the actions required to achieve an observable behavior consistent with an established standard of proficiency.

Criteria (Standards) against which the degree of actual proficiency performance is compared.

ALF CORE COMPETENCIES

Before listing the core competencies and describing each, it is important to note that -- at this stage in our investigation -- there emerges one core competency that especially differentiates the **ALF** role from others such as pre-adult educators. That core competency is **climate setting**. It is the ability to create a setting for learning that is psychologically and physically comfortable to the adult learner.

The **ALF** core competencies which have so far emerged from our review of the literature are:

1. Climate setting;
2. Planning the learning event;
3. Delivering the learning event;
4. Evaluating the planning, delivery, and results of the learning event;
5. Advocate of the learner; and
6. Professional practice:"Lifelong Learning" through personal professional growth.

Given our limited time to discuss this research with you today, the remainder of our discussion will detail the core competency model for the very critical **ALF** Core Competency of Climate Setting.

Core Competency #1: Climate Setting

Rationale. There is general agreement among those who perform educational activities involving adult clientele that the psychological climate which is established for learning is critical if the learning is to be achieved successfully. Knowles (1978, p.110) noted that a climate which emphasizes "mutuality", and which is "respectful", collaborative, and informal" is necessary to establishing an andragogical climate. These "design elements", as identified by Knowles, are consistent with the non- directive, client-centered approach espoused by Carl Rogers. "We are, in my view, faced with an entirely new situation in education where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning." (Rogers, 1967, p.2.)

Also critical is the "physical climate" in which a learning event is to be delivered. Taking into account such physiological concerns of adults (as compared to pre-adults) as decreasing auditory and visual acuity, slowing metabolic rate, reducing muscular strength, poorer circulation, slowing speed of response, a shortening span of attention, and an impairing of the memory is significant to the establishment of an effective climate for learning.

Assumptions.

"A psychologically secure [and physically confortable] environment usually promotes learning". (IBSTPI, 1988, p.49.)

"Aging is a characteristic of all humans. It occurs relentlessly and it effects different individuals diferently. It produces distinctive physiological and psychological changes which affect learning but these do not in any sense prevent learning" (Verner, et.al. , undated mimeo, p.2) if they are dealt with satisfactorily.

An **ALF** can and must establish the appropriate conditions essential to creating a supportive and comfortable climate for learning.

Proficiencies.

The **psychological climate** for facilitator-learner and learner-learner interactions in the learning setting will be enhanced by incorporating some of the following proficiencies:

Attending (Carkhuff)
Collaborating (Knowles)
Communicating (Carkhuff)
Empathic Understanding (Rogers)
Enthusiasm (Wlodkowski)
Genuineness (Rogers)
Humanness (Knowles)
Initiating (Carkhuff)
Mutual Respect (Knowles)
Mutual Trust (Knowles)
Openness and Authenticity (Knowles)
Pleasure (Knowles)
Responding (Carkhuff)
Supportiveness (Knowles)
Unconditional Positive Regard (Rogers)

The above list is not complete at this point in our investigation.

The **physical climate** for learning is enhanced by the following proficiencies that will establish learner comfort in:

Being able to hear,
Being able to see,
Bodily comfort (for example, warmth or coolness), and
Seating arrangements.

The above list is not complete at this point in our investigation.

Conditions. (For the proficiency of genuineness)

Given the psychological and physical aspects of an effective climate for learning, the learning setting is characterized by:

A realness in which both the **ALF** and the participants exhibit a personal "reality", that is, being themselves without "front or facade".

The **ALF** entering into a "... direct personal encounter with the learner, meeting her/him on a person to person basis." (Rogers, 1967, pp. 4-5.)

An environment in which **ALF** and the participants are free to express their true feelings such as being alternately

enthusiastic, frustrated, interested in each other, angry, sensitive or sympathetic, and even bored.

Performances. (For the proficiency of genuineness)

The **ALF** demonstrates the ability to:

Enter into an interpersonal relationship with participants without denial of his or her or their personal realities.

Express the feelings of he or she is experiencing moment by moment and can communicate them at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner.

Allow learners a freedom to learn, to be creative and inovative, and to explore that being learned in terms of its potential consequences in their lives.

Criteria. (For the proficiency of genuineness)

The **ALF**:

Accepts each participant as an important person who has the ability to be creative and to learn.

Shares his or her personal feelings related to the learning

being experienced and to the interactive environment of the learning setting.

Encourages the participants to share their personal feelings about the learning experience and the interactive environment of the learning setting.

Encourages the participants to express other feelings not directly related to the learning or the interactive environment.

Exhibits an honesty about him or herself as a person.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American Society for Training and Development. (1983). Models for excellence: The conclusions and recommendations of the ASTD training and development competency study. Washington, DC: ASTD.

Boshier, R. (1985). Conceptual framework for analyzing the training of trainers and adult educators. Convergence, 18(3-4), 3-21.

Brundage, D. H. and Mackeracher, D. (1980). Adult learning principles and their application program planning. Toronto, Ontario: Ministry of Education.

Bunning R. L. and Rossman, M. H. (1978). Knowledge and skills for the adult educator: A delphi study. Adult Education, 28, 139-155.

Cross, K. P. (1981). Adults as learners. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Daniel, R. and Rose, H. (1982). Comparative study of adult education practitioners and professors on future knowledge and skills needed by adult educators. Adult Education, 32, 75-88.

Knowles, M. S. (1975). Self-directed learning. Chicago, IL: Follett Publishing Co.

Merriam, S. (1985). Training adult educators in north america. Convergence, 18(3-4), 84-93.

Mocker, D. W. (1974). A report on the identification, classification, and ranking of competencies of ABE teachers. Kansas City, MO: Center for Resource Development in Adult Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Pinto, P. R. and Walker, J. W. (1978). A study of professional training and development roles and competencies. Madison, WI: American Society for Training and Development.

Sisco, B. R. (1984, November). Facilitator's role in adult education. Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference. Louisville, Kentucky.